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Benton Battle Field

By A. M. PRUDE



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
Benton Battle Field




By A. M. PRUDE
A Forrest Cavalryman



Author of
Soliloquy of Birmingham Bob of Rainbow Glen; 100,000 Men in Tears; One
Night's Confederate Service; Amazon of the 7th Alabama Cavalry;
One Night on Picket; Fifteen Day's Confederate Service
or "War is Hell." Et. al.



On this Booklet, I, who faced foes on Battle Fields, Stood Shock of Battle
without tremor and led onward charge, Build my Claim to Bravery
displayed on Carnage Ground, and Foundation my
Reputation as a Warrior.



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A. M. Prude, Pratt City, Ala., Slope No. 2, September, 1917
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DEDICATION

This Booklet is lovingly dedicated to Dr. C. N. Carraway, who, fingering my bowels with tenderness care, performed on me a dangerous and oftentimes fatal operation, which effectually and permanently ended my ten year suffering, and to Drs. C. C. Jones and Alfred Carraway his Assistants, and to Mrs. Carraway and her galaxy of sympathetic nurses, who, with watchful care tenderly nursed me when helpless and dependent was I as a new born babe, revived my faded hope of life, and restored youthful buoyancy, whose beauty, like infant's innocence and smiles, or like meteors the milkyway skies streaking, or, like stars at twilight silently creeping from day's obscurity to spangle evening skies, with their loveliness makes me glad, and who have abandoned the world with all its deceptive allurements and are, with altruistic devotion ministering to suffering humanity. When I meet them upon the street, their presence, brilliant like a star glittering along the midnight zodiac, cheers my sadness and gloom away as a smile to earth flashed from an angel's face through ajar'd gate of Paradise.

All the above mentioned, with united and skillful efforts snatched me from impatient, gloating grave which so close I neared, and tenderly nursed me back to life again. The remembrance of that night, although on operating table, lingering dwells in memory so kindly, charming to awed stillness, forms a brilliant, halo of cheer and gladness circling over a green, lovely flowery Oasis in the arid, desert waste of my sad, eventful and unhappy life, more beautiful by far, than the butterfly's trembling wing, the wild briars' bloom perfumed, or dewdrops impearled on green grass blades glittering in twilight morn.

"How Sharper than a Serpent's tooth is ingratitude."

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Ms. /.

Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company

As I take liberty of mentioning this company in my book, lest an evil motive be ascribed to me, now that my connection with it, through unavoidable circumstances, is severed, I wish to say it is in a spirit of pleasantry.

In fact, I was so long connected with it, I sometimes think I own a large, a very large, a controlling interest in the concern, mammoth as it is, which, alas! proves only an illusory, mocking, tantalizing dream that rapidly vanishes into sheer nothingness on arousing from lethargy into conscious activity, and leaves me mortified, humiliated, chagrined, and despaired into saddest gloom.

I have the kindest feeling for, and the greatest admiration of the T. C. I., because during our long business association it was so undeviatingly generous and courteous to me, to all its employees, as well as to the public in general, and, last, but not least, kind to, sympathetic with, and humane in its treatment of the poor, unfortunate convicts intrusted to its control by the State.

Furthermore, with the emoluments from this Booklet I expect to buy the thing, huge as it is, and double every employee's wages *who buys this book*, and amid deep tangled wild wood where Summers first their robes unfold and there, longest tarry, and the wild brier invites to luscious fruit, I'll build my villa where care relaxes into smiles and solicitude restrained, I'll triumph with ease, I shall, where breeze subdues the heat and with perfumed breath fans it away, where sweet scented wild shrubs thrive, where vines their grapes to ripeness purpled inviting hang, festooning tree to tree, throw away egregious complaints with vain and haughty regard, and face aglow with convivial smiles, brush forever away gloomy anxiety and disquieting despondency, and in quiescence, the subject of my earliest noontide songs and twilight vespers, merry to Lesbian lyre attuned, shall be praises to rivulets trembling in murmurs down their slope winding channels, rocks with moss o'er grown, and blissful groves of delightful country.

I'll take wings of morning, fly to verdant hills and watered pastures green, where beauty and quietude supremely reign, whence smiles the world like no where else and ends my fatigues from the coal fields, for habitation in that blest place solicits me, thence, in fruition, and tranquil ease, where envious care disturbs not our slumbers, marred only, *alas! fatally*, by absence of woman's crowning, elixired love in sparklings glittering there, rural affairs, tangled wild wood, shady parks, and grape vine swings from Sun's scorch hid, Heroes and fragrant breeze with echoes o'er the vales in dilliance sporting, shall in Odes, fadeless to immortality, be my themes.

Birmingham Bob of Rainbow Glen

Recounting His Jollities While on a Lark in New York City,
to His Friend, Snukum Sneezer Snolomigoster.

As on Broadway I one night strolled,
And of my stolen wealth I told,
I met a girl by name Katrine,
No sweeter hath yet e'er been seen.

She was a sprightly, buxon girl,
And did her hair in ringlets curl;
Nor was she one bit less genteel
Because of much expanse of heel.

Her age was far from "sweet sixteen"—
Twice twenty summers she has seen.
An old maid she is living yet,
There is no man whom she can get.

False were the hair and teeth she wore,
To tempt some man of little lore;
But never yet has one she found
In wedlock willing to be bound.

A fierce-eyed girl* from Pratt was she,
And in for fun both started we;
Across the street then we did prance
To where was on, we knew a dance.

Katrine I whirled in every set,
Till from her face poured streams of sweat;
We danced till every couple fagged,
And on my agile movements bragged.

"Katrine," I then said, "let us go;
This crowd for me is much too slow;
On Bowery I think we'll find
Men faster, girls more to my mind."

Katrine I to the door then led,
Huzzas loud heard was when I said,
"You all to know wish who I am—
I'm wealthy Bob from Birmingham."

To shun policemen we contrived,
And soon on Bowery arrived,
When Katrine, halting, said, "I think
Fast people go to skating rink."

*Employed by T. C. I.

"To skating rink," I said, "we go,
And wild oats much this night we'll sow."
The place not far was up the street,
And soon had we skates on our feet.

Around the many couples sped,
As Katrine in the ring I led;
And loud were cheers bystanders sent,
As I and Katrine whirling went.

Like courser in a great prize race,
Or as Camilla in the chase,
We whirled around mid eclat loud,
Which echoed was by passing cloud.

I was in midst of dreams of youth,
Was happy as mermaids, forsooth,
As they did through the ripples glide
And love songs sing in restless tide.

In fairy land I was, it seemed,
As panting Katrine much sweat streamed;
When 'gainst a nail I "stumped" my toe,
Which did me on the hard floor throw.

Katrine on floor I also felled,
And audience with laughter yelled;
Pandemonium now ran wild
As other skaters on us piled.

We had a hapless mix-up quite,
On that much unforgotten night,
When boys and girls all scrambling lay
On top of us in wild dismay.

Upon the floor we rolled and rolled,
And issued I oaths loud and bold;
Before was never heard such noise
As made was by us girls and boys.

I thought Old Devil now me had,
And at that nail, damn, was I mad,
When men astounded on me trod,
And Katrine screamed for help from God.

When I at last my feet regained,
I found my ankles both well sprained,
My elbows and my knees were bare,
Katrine she lost her teeth and hair.

Her head like looked an onion peeled,
As she on floor much crippled reeled
While searching for her teeth and wig,
Which found she not in pieces big.

When I that nail began to "cuss,"
The audience increased the fuss
As they through doors and windows fled,
Lest I with them augment the dead.

I followed them in open air,
And at them fiercely I did swear,
And crowds admiring round me flocked
As down policemen six I knocked.

I never was so mad before
As when hard hit my head that floor,
And athletes, tumbling, tore my hide
In patches long, and also wide.

When I that floor struck with my head,
With jar enough to wake the dead,
I saw in skies most every star—
All those near by, and some afar.

Katrine, when last heard from, frightened, mortified and chagrined at her ill-fated luck, and lost from her escort, was swimming the Hudson, toothless and hairless, nearing the far-side shore. Alarmed at the wonderful prowess of her liege lord, she was making frantic efforts with bewailing utterances, with delay laid aside, to reach the Magic City of the South, nestled at the foot of the Alleghanies, between the coal fields and iron mountains of Alabama.

"Hooraw" for Bob, Katrine, Birmingham, Pratt City, Slope No. 2 and the T. C. I.!

May they grow, flourish and spread out like willow bushes green fringing the murky waters of Slope 2 Pond.

More anon—Bob.

Benton Battle

On the 10th day of April, 1865, the day after General Lee grounded his shattered arms, and furled his ball-perforated and shell-ripped flag at Appomattox, where and when died Confederacy, the Fourth and Seventh Alabama cavalry regiments, both together not over six hundred strong, were posted on a ridge about half mile east of Benton, on the Alabama river, to dispute with General Wilson, with his thirteen thousand five hundred men, concerning the right of way to Montgomery.

Our position overlooked Benton, the river and the little valley in which the town nestled. That was the first time we had encountered the Yankees since our disastrous retreat from Nashville. After that retreat, it was evident from the conversation of the officers they would never stand again in battle, and there is one thing sure, if the officers will not stand, the poor private is going to run, too. I overheard some officers talking that morning, one of them a captain in the Fourth Alabama, said, "I am going to call around me the chivalrous, the brave, the noble and the true, and die in the last 'ditch,' my sword dripping blood, and my face toward the dastardly and damnable Yankee foe."

I said, inaudibly then, "Yes, you will be the first to flee from this ridge." There were some government supplies stored in Benton, and this captain had secured by some means, a bolt of domestic, I suppose fifty yards, which he had tied to the rear of his saddle.

About the noon hour, the long looked for but unwished for Wilson, with his host, appeared very suddenly on the far side of the little valley, not more than half mile away. Our horses were already saddled, and baggage thrown on their backs, ready to move at once.

The order came, "mount, fall in line of battle," and in less than three minutes, we were in battle array, ready for the conflict. That was the grandest sight I ever saw, if danger could have been eliminated.

From our elevated position, we could distinctly see our pickets, not more than twenty-five men, fighting Wilson's whole command, apparently. They were dismounted, and with no breastworks except atmosphere, we could see smoke boiling from their muskets, curling upward in air until Wilson's mounted chargers were within fifty feet, galloping like mad men.

On, on, across the little intervening valley came Wilson's thirteen thousand brave and victorious men, well clothed, well-fed, well equipped with implements of war, mounted upon fine and well-groomed horses, charging impetuously toward our little band of six hundred stationed along the ridge awaiting their onslaught. On came Wilson without obstruction, to the foot of the ridge, nor did they stop there. On up the acclivity

they rushing came, frightful in apperance as is oncoming tornado, their well-directed balls in multitudes alarmingly near began whistling most uncomfortable and unmusical sounds.

My first impluse was to charge over them and cutting right and left, my eyes aglow with patriotic and vengeful glare, constate them into frenzy wild, open a broad gap through their ranks and scatter them in confusion and demoralization, and repent them into grief abundant for their temerity, but after rapid and sagacious reflection of less than a moment, I reckoned it not best, as Hasdrubal at Metaurus, tried that costly expedient on a similar emergency and found it non-conducive to longevity, wrought economic disaster, his body gory, a headless corpse, his head a ghastly trophy, graced a hated inveterate victor's intoxicating triumph, and I deemed it prudent, to first examine the rear, and see if there were any in that direction coming.

Several men down the line to my left were wounded, and were giving vent to fright and suffering in loud pain proclaiming wails and earnest praises to God for help in alarming ejaculations, and Charlie Cook, who was by my side, unintentionly caught a whizzing ball with his leg which caused him to raise a squall shrill, sudden, loud and terrorizing like a panther, a monkey, two coons and a wild house cat clawing and scratching indiscriminately in a free-for-all fight in a pile in midnight combat fierce, frightening me, and chilling my already quaking bones until I thought I was shot too, and most mortally so, and I began looking for a soft place on which to fall, but before I could find a desirable spot exactly suited to my taste, I saw the before mentioned Captain, who was suddenly seized with trembling fear, fleeing for safety, with face plainly picturing fierce despair, and just then,

I heard the cannon's startling boom,
Which caused me dread great of the tomb.
The Devil, too, I thought of him,
As tree tops shells began to trim,

and I fell right in behind the Captain, going away from there too.

At this crisis I tried to pray, but not being accustomed to it I could think of nothing to say except my fathers table blessing, "*Lord make us thankful for what we are about to receive*" which I thought, after repeating many times, very inappropriate and much unsuitable in a time like that, so I abandoned prayer and resorted to active flight, which I soon found an effective specific, and at once obtained most satisfactory and pleasing results.

Bless your soul, kind reader, we "lit out" from there, and don't you forget it; from under those unfriendly skies falling on us bomb shells while bursting, pandemonium and chaos reigned supreme, and, exactly as I had predicted, the Captain was first to break, leaving his men behind.

His horse's mettle he sure did stir,
With whip and rein and saw-like spur,
He, like a streak of lightening greased,
Fled, for he was with great fright seized.

I had a very fast horse, and, reader, I verily believe I would have distanced the Captain that day, but just as he began his flight, his bolt of *domestic* began unfolding, and he had not gone far until about seventy-five feet of it was fluttering gallantly in the breeze behind. He did not have time to jerk it loose from his saddle; in fact, he never knew it was flying, for he was not thinking about things in the rear except Yankees, and dim of battle roaring. He was perfectly oblivious to all else besides. He had no time to fool away with dry goods then.

Sometimes the Captain's tail was high in air like a kite, and again down on the ground; sometimes flapping and flopping in my face so I could not see, and then in my horses face so he could not get along to my entire satisfaction, as the exigency of the occasion just at that time actually and absolutely demanded. I was afraid my horse would get his feet tangled in it and fall, and I knew I would be trampled to death by those following if he did, or I feared it would get wrapped around my neck and jerk me down upon the ground. I tried, and tried in vain, to get a hold on it and tear it off; I could touch it occasionally with my hand, but it invariably slipped out of my grasp, and again fluttered in midair far above our heads.

When we left Benton, there were Yankees in multitudes in front of us approaching at a rapid rate; soon there would have been "Yankees to the right of us, Yankees to the left of us, and from the jaws of hell rushed away we six hundred." The whole command broke in stampede wild.

When we broke from our battle line on the ridge, the road for about a mile ran through wooded ground, and we spread out through this about one hundred yards on each side, and, let me tell you, reader, we, like a stampeded herd of buffaloes with a rattle box to each one's tail, we, the Fourth and Seventh jumbled, we mingled, we commingled, we mixed and we mingled again. We "hit the grit," we "scatlofiscated," we came in off the ice," we "made a home run," we "got there, Ely" and did all kindred and related things. Sure, it was a race for safety, not for fun. Trees, briers, bushes, limbs, tree-tops, logs, stumps, gullies, ditches, bogs, quagmires, rattle snake and gopher dens and little things like them stood not at all in our way.

Don't you know, kind reader, Yankees had fun that day.

If Wellington, Napoleon and Blucher could have seen us that day, the frightened, fleeing and terror-stricken remnants of the Fourth and Seventh Alabama Cavalry, they would have been to mortification ashamed of Waterloo.

About a mile and a half from Benton, our way led through a long lane, and having to draw in our wings here, we crowded into it, still mixing and mingling, commingling and "getting there Ely," bullets whistling above and around uncomfortably near.

Those people behind *hallowed* to us in front to throw down the fence on both sides and let the men scatter, but, 'pshaw! we had no spare time to devote to fences. - The Captain and I were doing our share of the scattering.

We were measuring the ground with great rapidity far ahead of the Yankees, and were swiftly increasing space between us in large, beautiful, satisfactory and admirable quantities.

About half a mile from the lane we had an old, dilapidated and apparently rotten bridge to cross. In going down to Benton the day before, we were afraid for two horses to walk side by side, for fear it would fall, so we crossed in single file. When we first left Benton I thought of that bridge. I thought the first men who reached it would pass over safely, and so many would soon crowd upon it, it would break down and all would be either drowned, killed or captured, and I determined, if possible to keep well in front, and besides I had no inclination to stay back there any way. We had a good, dry, firm road until we reached the bridge; beyond we had about half mile of mud and mire.

Just as I struck the bridge, the Captain, in a lope, with his tail still waving high in air, rode off the far end. He was the first man over and I about fifth. When I struck the bridge I shut off steam, and started across in a walk, yelling back to those in the rear not to crowd upon me, as they would crush the bridge; but, 'pshaw! they heeded not my warning, and the panic-stricken fugitives began passing me, and I again sunk spurs deep into my faithful horse's side, turned on all steam possible, and went off that bridge in a lope, too.

I turned on my horse my armed heel,
And stirred his courage with my steel,
Bounded the fiery steed in air,
I sat half bent, but firmly there.

Across that creek I swift did ride,
And in the race I mocked its tide,
And on opposing shore took ground,
With splash, with scramble, and with bound.

When I landed safely across, I looked back, and just as many men and horses as could were piling on top of the bridge, but fortunately it never gave way, and all passed over safely. From some cause, the Yankees halted before reaching the bridge. Had they pursued us persistently they would have killed or captured nearly all of us, as we were delayed in crossing and the mud was so deep after crossing we could travel only in a walk.

I guess the reason the Yankees stopped, they saw the Captain's tail fluttering in breezing air and mistook it for a flag of truce.

Soon after the Captain rode off the bridge, some man's horse stepped on his flag and ripped it loose from his saddle, almost jerking him and his horse down in the mud.

He thought the Yankees had him then. It was to my extreme delight when I saw his domestic torn from his saddle, and to my great merriment, when a place of safety I had found, and fright had subsided.

After the Captain lost his caudal appendage, the last I saw of him, his horse, stimulated much by the influence of his master's cruel spurs, was struggling and floundering in the mud like a sea lion on land or a young whale left stranded on the beach by tide receding. He rapidly increased distance between himself and me and the Yankees, economizing time with greatest rapidity.

He seemed to think the "last ditch" was over in Georgia somewhere, for he evidently was extremely anxious to reach the Chattahoochee. At any rate, he seemed to think the "last ditch" was no where about Benton.

I saw the Captain no more, but methinks preadventure, from his inspiration of patriotic zeal, and bravery, and eager desire to serve his bleeding and devastated country, and relieve her of her bitter woes, he fled across the cotton fields of Alabama, stopped not at the bordering Chattahoochee, but leaped it, and the overflowing streams of Georgia, like a grasshopper pursued by a hungry hopping toad, and inextricably bogged himself in the marshy rice fields of South Carolina like a burrowing gopher, or drowned himself in the foamy surf off North Carolina reefs trying to wide Atlantic swim.

Talk not, in terms of praise, admiration and wonder of Pharsalia, Munda, Austerlitz, Jena, Waterloo, Balaklava, Marengo, Gettysburg, Spottsylvania, Arbela, Chickamauga or even the marvelous flight of Day's frighened brigade from Missionary Ridge terrified to distraction, and little skirmishes like them, for they actually pale into utter insignificance, and absolute unimportance, when compared with the Fourth and Seventh Alabama's wild headlong, unprecedented and brilliant flight from Benton battlefield, which, as Virgil says, "is the theme of Heroes admiring."

* * * * *

Reader, don't you think because I evinced such inordinate desire for distance, and a wider expanse of territory contravening, and from Benton precipitately fled, and hiked so suddenly and rapidly away, that I am a coward and won't fight, and get yourself with me mixed up in a noisy rencounter both fierce and serious and perchance get yourself tangled into interminable

and irreparable trouble "monkeying" around me thinking I won't fight; for I only ran that day because I couldn't fly, and I was "grilling hot an' er sweatin'" too, hot, yes hot as Bob Thales when eat-out by his wife's kinsfolk, mother-in-law inclusive, and then and there, notwithstanding my besetting difficulties, perplexing and harrassing, and with sweat much wet, I came out *even with them*, for I killed as many of them as they did of me, in fact, when the sudorifice race ended, I was, thank God, a little, though very little, ahead, and was rapidly gaining ground on them every jump and leap I made.

If you don't think I'll fight, and think I delight not in tumultuous riot, and have no predilection for nose smashing melee to thy countenance unfriendly, and am now only boasting chimerically, pull off your coat, roll up your sleeves, and with me, with harlequin activity into arena martial walk, if think you it only pleasing comedy.

Although I never had but one fight in my life, not much scrap at that, only two licks struck. In long ago receding years, a fellow struck me and then I, mad, with bleeding nose, it having been flattened and spread out much, with violent belligerence and pugilistic fury and with loud pain announcing screams struck the ground, while he, malignant, in crowning triumph o'er me prostrate smiling stood.

Yet with hostile fire through my crooked veins in flames burning I'll fight any man who snuffs the dusty wind, be he Caucasian, African, Hindoo, German, Hottentot or Irish Police if he will go at once, fearing not submarines, to illfated Belgium's blood drenched grounds, where are gory trenches dug and war's ceaseless echoes are resounding heard, or, if, it delighteth him more, let him veer to the faraway newly twice discovered North Pole Sea, where shrill winds blow, and upon a lofty, glittering, pole-marking iceberg, with the summit of its glacial spires lifted high into frosty air, majestic in its solitude, with patience await *there*, the ferocity of my coming, and sad eventualities following.

I'll fight him, a dirty, impudent sinner, to a finish, with any weapon of war he may select, that has ever been invented yet, from a thunder-roaring, ground-jarring, fire-flashing, bomb-belching, water-splashing, navy-sinking siege gun down to brawny Sampson's wicked mule jaw.

With angry frown and scowling brow I'll pass him to the shades below into abysmal night. I'll beat the seventeen ugly devils out of him, I'll tear him limb from limb and pound his irreligious bones to dust damfidont

Good-Bye

READER.

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